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Operational activities for development: triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Islamic Republic of Iran:* draft resolution

Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/211 of 22 December 1989, 47/199 of 22 December 1992, 50/120 of 20 December 1995, 52/203 of 18 December 1997 and 53/192 of 15 December 1998, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 1998/26 of 26 July 1998, 1999/5 and 1999/6 of 23 July 1999, 2000/19 and 2000/20 of 28 July 2000 and 2001/41 of 26 July 2001, and other relevant resolutions,

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000,[1]

Reaffirming that operational activities for development within the United Nations system have an important role to play in enabling developing countries to continue to take a lead role in the management of their own development process in a continuously changing global context,

Reaffirming also that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities of the United Nations system should be, inter alia, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the development needs of developing countries in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out for the benefit of recipient developing countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development,

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* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China.

[1] Resolution 55/2.

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Stressing that national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities for development within the United Nations system and that programmes should be based on such development plans and priorities and should therefore be country-driven,

Stressing also that the United Nations development system, in order to ensure national ownership of its operational activities for development and assist programme countries in meeting the current challenges of globalization and international development goals, should integrate its country-level operations with national policies and programmes under the leadership and with the full participation of the Government,

Stressing further, in that context, the need to take into account the time-bound targets identified in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes and commitments of relevant major United Nations conferences, as well as the individual mandates and complementarities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations development system,

Bearing in mind that the effectiveness of operational activities should be assessed by their impact on the sustained economic growth and sustainable development of developing countries,

Recognizing that globalization, technological change and the need for the integration of the developing countries in the world economy represent major challenges for development,

Recognizing also that new technologies, including information and communication technologies, present an opportunity to accelerate development in developing countries, but that the access to those technologies is uneven and that a digital divide still exists between developing countries and the rest of the world,

Noting that, while the scope of operational activities of the organizations of the United Nations system includes situations where a more flexible response capacity of the system is required, the focus of operational activities should be on actions that have a long-term impact on poverty eradication and development in accordance with the respective mandates of the United Nations funds and programmes,

Recognizing the urgent and specific needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries,

Emphasizing that developing countries are responsible for their development processes and in this context stressing the responsibility of the international community, in partnership, to assist developing countries in their national development efforts,

Recalling the role of the Economic and Social Council in providing coordination and guidance to the United Nations system to ensure that policies formulated by the General Assembly, in particular during the triennial policy review of operational activities, are implemented on a system-wide basis in accordance with Assembly resolutions 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and 50/227 of 24 May 1996,

Recognizing that the preference for short-term and earmarked development funding has resulted in the failure to reach a critical mass of core resources required for long-term development cooperation and compromised the efficient use of funds for attaining development goals and towards more integrated development support,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system[2] and on progress in the implementation of the multi-year funding frameworks and evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;[3]

2. *Reaffirms* its resolutions 47/199, 50/120, 53/192 and the parts relevant to operational activities for development of its resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, and stresses the need to implement fully, on the basis of lessons learned, all the elements of those resolutions in a coherent and timely manner, keeping in mind their interlinkages;

3. *Emphasizes* that recipient Governments have the primary responsibility for coordinating, on the basis of national strategies and priorities, all types of external assistance, including that provided by multilateral organizations, in order to integrate effectively such assistance into their development process;

4. *Emphasizes also* the need to fulfil the commitments, goals and targets set in the Millennium Declaration and by the major United Nations conferences, and in that context reiterates the importance of continuously monitoring progress made in that direction;

5. *Stresses* that the United Nations development system, in order to ensure national ownership of its operational activities for development and assist programme countries in meeting the current challenges of globalization and international development goals, should integrate its country-level operations with national policies and programmes under the leadership and with the full participation of the Government;

I. Role of operational activities in response to global challenges

6. *Stresses also* the need for all organizations of the United Nations development system to focus their efforts at the field level on priority areas, in accordance with the priorities identified by recipient countries, in particular assisting programme countries to respond more effectively to the economic and social impact of globalization, facilitating their integration into the world economy, accelerating their economic growth and development and reducing their poverty;

7. *Requests* the organizations of the United Nations system to review, in consultation with the Governments concerned, the technical skill profiles of their country offices in order to respond to the requests for support from programme countries;

8. *Calls upon* the organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adapt their strategies and activities and enhance their coordination and collaboration, taking into account the need to assist programme countries in attaining the development goals of the Millennium Summit and major United Nations conferences;

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[2] A/56/320 and Add.1.

[3] A/56/70-E/2001/58.

9. *Encourages* the United Nations system to support, through its operational activities for development, national efforts to acquire the capacities and infrastructure required to mobilize information and communication technologies and put them at the service of development, and encourages all organizations of the system to collaborate with the recently established United Nations task force on information and communication technologies;

II. Funding for operational activities for development of the United Nations system

10. *Stresses* that core resources, because of their untied nature, are the bedrock of the operational activities of the United Nations system and, in this regard, notes with serious concern the overall decline or stagnation in core resources available to the United Nations funds and programmes, and emphasizes the need for a substantial and sustained increase in the core or regular resources for operational activities for development;

11. *Notes with regret* that, although significant progress has already been achieved on the governance and functioning of the United Nations development system, there has not been, as part of that overall process of change, a significant increase in core resources for operational activities for development, and expresses serious concern at the persistent insufficiency of resources for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in particular in terms of contributions to core resources;

12. *Strongly reaffirms* that the impact of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system must be enhanced by, inter alia, a substantial increase in their funding on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries, as well as through the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/199, 48/162, 50/120, 52/203 and 53/192 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/19;

13. *Reaffirms* the need for priority allocation of scarce grant resources to programmes and projects in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries;

14. *Requests* that the establishment of new trust funds by United Nations funds and programmes be done on an exceptional basis after consultation with and approval by the respective executive boards;

15. *Stresses* the need for continuous overall improvement in the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the United Nations system in delivering its development assistance and welcomes steps that have been taken to that end, and encourages the use of information technologies as a means to support more effectively the delivery of development cooperation by the United Nations system;

16. *Emphasizes* the importance of shared responsibility in a spirit of partnership, taking into account official development assistance targets, including targets established at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, underlines the need to avoid overdependence on a limited number of donors, and calls on donors to increase their contributions to the core or regular resources of United Nations funds and programmes, encouraging donor countries to increase multi-year pledging commitments of core resources;

17. *Requests* the Economic and Social Council to consider, at its substantive session of 2003, the conclusions reached at the present triennial policy review on resources for operational activities for development, as well as the conclusions of the International Conference on Financing for Development planned for 2002, reviewing the progress on the issue of funding of development cooperation activities of the United Nations system;

III. Capacity-building

18. *Stresses* that capacity-building and its sustainability should be explicitly articulated as a goal of technical assistance provided by operational activities with the aim of strengthening national capacities, and requests the United Nations organizations to review their efforts in the field of capacity-building and to report, through the Secretary-General, to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2002 on the results achieved in this area;

19. *Reiterates* the need to intensify the use by the United Nations system, to the fullest extent possible and practicable, of available national expertise and indigenous technologies in the implementation of operational activities and in the recruitment and training of national project personnel, including national consultants, for the formulation and implementation of development projects and programmes supported by the United Nations development system;

IV. United Nations Development Assistance Framework

20. *Takes note* of the national experiences related to the introduction of the pilot phase of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment, and also takes note of the evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment contained in the report of the Secretary-General;[3]

21. *Encourages* the United Nations system to ensure that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment constitute a country-driven, collaborative and coherent response of the United Nations system to national priorities and policies, as expressed in relevant national development plans and strategies;

22. *Recognizes* that the major coordinating responsibilities of the Government of programme countries in the formulation of coordination frameworks, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment, require its full involvement and leadership;

23. *Requests* the United Nations system to intensify capacity-building initiatives to support national Governments in their function of coordinating all forms of external assistance, including that received from the United Nations system, also through a more effective involvement of programme countries in the management of all forms of coordination frameworks;

24. *Recommends* to the organizations of the United Nations system that, when the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment are undertaken, measures should be adopted to simplify programming and country assessment procedures so as to reduce transaction costs and avoid additional procedural requirements and workload for recipient countries;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to undertake an evaluation of the progress of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the common country assessment processes and their impact on the field of operational activities, as an integral part of the next triennial policy review of operational activities, and to report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2004, on the results of such an evaluation, including lessons learned and recommendations made, for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session;

V. Evaluation of operational activities for development

26. *Emphasizes* the importance of the monitoring and evaluation of the operational activities of the United Nations system in the context of the programme approach, in order to enhance the effectiveness and impact, in the context of the programme approach, of development cooperation of the system on the recipient countries, and reiterates that the monitoring and evaluation process of operational activities, including where appropriate joint evaluations by the United Nations system, should be impartial and independent, under the overall leadership of the Government;

27. *Reiterates* the need to strengthen the capacities of the recipient countries to perform effective programme, project and financial monitoring, as well as impact evaluations of operational activities funded by the United Nations, and underlines the importance of promoting, under the leadership of Governments, greater collaboration on questions relating to evaluation among recipient Governments and the United Nations development system at the country level;

28. *Recognizes* that a comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluation calls for a closer involvement of national authorities in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of operational activities, to ensure that the results of those evaluations are utilized to improve the content of developmental activities and their impact;

29. *Takes note* of the impact evaluations of capacity-building and poverty eradication undertaken according to resolution 53/192, and requests the organizations of the United Nations system to review the conclusions reached by those evaluations and lessons learned in the light of their own experience and to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2002, through the Secretary-General, on the results of that review;

30. *Requests* that the impact evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system be continued on a more extensive scale, urges donor countries to provide the necessary support for this effort, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the results of this impact evaluation activity to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council, in the context of the triennial policy review;

31. *Reiterates* the call in resolution 53/192 for recipient Governments concerned to be fully and effectively involved in the impact evaluation of operational activities, and encourages the United Nations system to support those countries that intend to undertake the evaluations themselves, as and when required;

32. *Reiterates also* the need for the United Nations system to strengthen its efforts, in consultation with recipient countries, to ensure that the lessons learned

from both monitoring and evaluation exercises are systematically applied to programming processes at the operational level and that evaluation criteria are built into all projects and programmes at their design stage, requests the funds, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system to carry out an assessment and disseminate the experience so acquired through effective and efficient cooperation within the United Nations system, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2002 on this matter;

VI. Simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures

33. *Reaffirms* that simplification and harmonization of procedures, as well as their decentralization, as adopted by the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, should be responsive to the needs of developing countries;

34. *Notes* the progress achieved in the simplification and harmonization of programming cycles and rules and procedures, and calls on the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies to improve coordination efforts in the field by taking further steps at the headquarters level to enhance and ensure the sustainability of this process;

35. *Emphasizes* that the simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures should aim at reducing, where appropriate, the complexities and diversity of requirements, which still place enormous burdens on the recipient countries through high transaction costs, and that innovations in this area should ensure, in their implementation, the full participation of the Government, with the objective of reducing administrative and financial costs to the recipient country as well as to the United Nations system;

36. *Calls upon* the United Nations system for an assessment of the transaction costs borne by recipient countries in programming and implementing operational activities for development, and their comparison with the total expenditures of operational activities in the field, and requests the Secretary-General to report on this question to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2003;

37. *Recognizes* that the diversity of the programming procedures of the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies results from the diversity of their mandates as well as the decisions of their respective governing bodies, nevertheless calls upon those organizations to make special efforts to utilize all avenues for stronger cooperation and coordination, which should be complementary to similar coordination efforts at the country level, and urges them to keep recipient countries fully informed of headquarters decisions;

38. *Requests* the United Nations Development Group and the Administrative Committee on Coordination to address the requirements for further simplification of procedures and to submit, through the Secretary-General, a yearly report to the Economic and Social Council on progress achieved in these areas;

VII. Resident coordinator system

39. *Reaffirms* that the resident coordinator system is an important vehicle in the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations system at the country level and a key instrument for the efficient and effective coordination of the

operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and requests the United Nations system, including the funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and the Secretariat, to continue to provide support to the resident coordinator system;

40. *Recognizes* efforts, including those made through the United Nations Development Group, to further improve the resident coordinator system, and appreciates the progress achieved so far in broadening the pool of resident coordinators and in improving their gender balance, and invites the funds, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system to make further efforts in that direction;

41. *Encourages* the establishment of more effective mechanisms for a more direct and immediate dialogue, feedback, participation and interaction between the resident coordinator and the specialized agencies, including small technical agencies and organizations of the United Nations system without field level representation, also through a wider use of information and communication technologies;

42. *Recognizes* the need to engage more effectively and substantively the Government of the recipient country in joint activities of the resident coordinator system, such as theme groups, including for planning and programming;

43. *Requests* the resident coordinator system to assist Governments in their efforts towards implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences, and encourages further work by the country-level theme groups;

44. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue improving and strengthening the resident coordinator system through the support and participation of all organizations of the United Nations system, including those with no field-level representation and the regional commissions, on the basis of their respective mandates and in close consultation with the national Government;

VIII. Planning, programming and implementation

45. *Encourages* greater cooperation among the World Bank, regional development banks and all funds and programmes with a view to increased complementarity and better division of labour, as well as enhanced coherence in their sectoral activities, building on the existing arrangements and fully in accordance with the priorities of the recipient Government;

46. *Notes* the progress achieved in the area of common premises and shared services at the country level within the United Nations system, recognizes the need to justify the pursuit of common premises on the basis of the adequate nature and size of the development cooperation programmes and projects, reaffirms the need to take fully into account cost-benefit studies as called for in relevant resolutions, and encourages further implementation of such initiatives, where appropriate, while ensuring that there will be no additional burden imposed on host countries;

47. *Recognizes* that the utilization of advanced information and communication technologies could also provide the necessary platform for more coordination and cohesion at the field level;

IX. Humanitarian assistance

48. *Reiterates* that the phases of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development often overlap and occur simultaneously, and notes the need for a comprehensive approach to countries in crisis, national authorities having a lead role in all aspects of the recovery plan, and also notes in this context the need for an early application of developmental tools in humanitarian emergencies;

49. *Stresses* that contributions to humanitarian assistance should not be provided at the expense of development assistance and that additional resources for humanitarian assistance should be made available by the international community;

X. Gender

50. *Notes* the progress achieved in gender mainstreaming in operational activities;

51. *Also notes* the continuing efforts to improve the gender balance on appointments within the United Nations system at the headquarters and at the country level in positions that affect operational activities;

52. *Calls* for renewed efforts in gender mainstreaming in the framework of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system in all fields, in particular in support of poverty eradication;

XI. Regional dimensions of operational activities

53. *Reiterates* the growing need for incorporating the regional and sub-regional dimension, where appropriate, in the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and encourages the resident coordinators, in close consultation with Governments, to secure greater involvement of the regional commissions, taking into account their agreed mandates and work programmes, in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as appropriate;

XII. South-South cooperation/economic and technical cooperation among developing countries

54. *Notes* that country-driven programming offers additional opportunities for greater use of technical cooperation among developing countries modalities by programme countries, and reiterates its call on the United Nations system to take more concerted and coordinated measures to improve the effective incorporation of technical cooperation among developing countries into their programmes and projects and to intensify efforts, including by developing specific mechanisms to mainstream this modality into the United Nations coordination frameworks in collaboration with the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of the United Nations Development Programme, and all other relevant international institutions;

55. *Reiterates* that South-South cooperation, including technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, offers viable opportunities for the development of developing countries, and in this context requests the executive boards of the funds and programmes to review, with a view to considering an increase, the allocation of resources for activities involving technical cooperation among developing countries;

56. *Requests* the United Nations system to take appropriate measures to improve the effective incorporation of technical cooperation among developing countries into their programmes and projects, and to intensify efforts towards mainstreaming the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries, including through support for the activities of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and encourages other relevant international institutions to take similar measures;

XIII. Follow-up

57. *Reaffirms* that the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system should take appropriate action for the full implementation of the present resolution, and reiterates the request to the executive heads of those funds, programmes and specialized agencies to submit a yearly progress report to their governing bodies on measures taken and envisaged for the implementation of the present resolution, as well as appropriate recommendations;

58. *Invites* the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes to ensure that the heads of those funds and programmes include in their annual reports to the Economic and Social Council, prepared in accordance with Council resolution 1994/33 of 28 July 1994, a thorough analysis of problems encountered and lessons learned, with emphasis on issues arising from the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme, the triennial policy review and the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and major United Nations conferences, so as to allow the Council to fulfil its coordinating role;

59. *Reiterates* the provisions of its resolution 48/162, which details the respective functions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, and encourages the Economic and Social Council, within its institutional role, to provide overall guidance to the United Nations system on operational activities for development;

60. *Requests* the Economic and Social Council, during the operational activities segment of its substantive session, to focus on lessons learned and impact evaluations in the implementation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and to provide the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system with policy guidance;

61. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consultation with the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, to submit a progress report to the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 2002, on an appropriate management process, containing clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time-frames for the full implementation of the present resolution;

62. *Invites* the Economic and Social Council, during the operational activities segment of its substantive sessions of 2002 and 2003, to examine the operational activities of the United Nations system in order to evaluate the implementation of the present resolution with a view to ensuring its full implementation;

63. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the present resolution in the context of the triennial policy review, and to make appropriate recommendations.